Numb. 15.

The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, *May* 22. 1695.

Quest. 1. *WHat is* Fondness? *Whether it be possible for Parents to be* over-fond *of their Children? and whether the* Humour *of some Parents be not very* Ridiculous, *who are always* Playing *with their Children, and talking of their childish Employments and Actions?*

Answ. For *Fondness*, the very *Notation* of the Word gives it but an Indifferent Character; For it signifies no more or less than Plain Folly, as every one knows, that has but the least Acquaintance with our Old *English* Writers, being deriv'd from *Fon*, which is a *Fool*, in *Spencer*, and other Old Poets. Thus in *Spencer's Shepherd's Calendar*, he brings in *Thenot* speaking to *Cuddy* in *Feb.* "Thou "art a *Fon* of thy Love to boast——— And *Cuddy* bobbing again in *April*: "Siker, I hold him for a "greater *Fon*, &c. ———Whence *Fond*, and *Fondness*, which we now use much in the same sence with *Easiness* and *Good Nature*; though something particular is noted by it, by *Fondness* being generally understood, either a *vitious*, or an *extravagant kindness* towards any one, most commonly some *Relation*, and this, *open*, and *expos'd* to the world.

Now this being the sence of the word, there will be no great matter of difficulty in the Question, whether 'tis possible for *Parents* to be *too fond* of their *Children*, since we have as many instances to prove the *affirmative*, as there are of unhappy *Children*, ruin'd by such *Indulgence*.

But we suppose the *Fondness* here intended, is that of *Parents* towards their *Children* when in their *Infancy*, when the *Honour* of being a *Father* first comes upon 'em, or when the *little Fools* begin first to *talk* and *play* with the *Great ones*; and this will be clear'd in the answer to the third and last question, "Whether their *Humour* been't sufficiently *ridi-* "*culous* who are always *playing* with their *children*, "and *talking* and *laughing* at their *childish employ-* "*ments*, *discourses* and *actions*? To which we reply, that, to be always employ'd in this manner, to *Plague* others with the perpetual relation of insipid childish follies, or to betray an *extravagant*, and *immoderate affection* towards children, all these extreams are equally ridiculous. But then neither do we here condemn a very great *Tenderness* and *complaisance* towards Children, not even though it should sometimes be in private, expressed by such *Actions* as would, if more publick, appear sufficiently diverting.

Socrates told *Alcibiades*, who caught him playing with a child, and *laugh'd* at him heartily; "That "he'd do well to *suspend* his censures till he was "himself a *Father*. ——— And every body knows what Answer the wise King *Agesilaus*, returned to his Friends, when they surpriz'd him among his children curvetting upon a *Hobby-Horse*. There have been also in our own age, persons of prudence and sence enough (particularly the pious and ingenious author of the *Winter-Evenings* conferences) who even recommend the conversation with *children*, as they begin to show the first *dawnings* of Reason, as extreamly *diverting*, as well as *Innocent*; and 'tis pity those should ever have *any* of their *own* who don't *think so*. There's nothing in the World, says *Petrarch*, that's *sweeter*, or more *agreeable* then the little *prattlings* and looks of an Infant.

——*Syderei vultus, & verba, ligatis,*
Interrupta modis.

As he quotes it from *Statius*. Nay, even the Fathers of the Church have, in the Primitive Ages, recommended this, as one of the most *natural*, and ingenuous *Entertainments*: *Minutius Felix* was no *Fool*, nay he was a Gentleman, and a *Lawyer*, and yet, even in so grave a thing as an *Apology* for the *Christians*, he thinks it not incongruous to give us a neat, and inimitable Description of so trivial a thing as little Boys playing at *Duck and Drake*; and that which he adds concerning their *Dimidiata verba & offensantis Linguæ fragmina*, &c. is not more difficult to be *translated* then 'tis to be *imitated*. And even *before children* arrive to such an *Age*, the *little Blessings* make a shift to entertain us in their way, with so much *sweetness* and *Innocence* that nothing but a meer *Barbarian* can be proof against it. There being besides this, a natural *tenderness* and *affection* which is due from any person to that which he has brought into the World, which those who *want*, may go learn it even from *Brute* Creatures, tho the tryal of their *kindness*, and the chief instance of it, is in giving 'em a pious and *ingenuous Education*, and doing nothing *before* 'em when they grow up which they would not have 'em practice.

——And here, by the way, we can't but recommend the ingenious Mr. *Flurs* History of the *Choice and method of Studies*, not long since translated from the *French*, into our own Language, as a Book which gives some of the best hints, for *forming the minds* of children, of any we ever yet saw.

But to *return to our* subject, which 'tis now time to *close*. All that *remains* upon that Head, is only to *observe* the *mean* between a *worse* then *brutal* neglect of *children*, or *aversion from them*, and that *nauseous fondness* of some persons *towards* them, which must needs make 'em *appear contemptible* and *ridiculous*. We shall dismiss this subject with a *Copy* of *Verses*, which some *Wag*, or other has sent us, on an Argument very near akin to that we have been discoursing of, and which he inscribes,

To the Laud and Praise of Fatherhood.

When *Nature* did design some *wondrous thing*,
It made a FATHER, or at least a *King*.

Wellfare Old Sparta! *who the work once done,*
Would, right or wrong, be joyful for a Son:
They took their wives good word, nor dar'd gain-say
Their Truth; we Christians have no better way.
To out-do their very Wives *the men would strive,*
The kindest, tenderest, fondest things alive.
And who would not, who rightly understood
The Worship and the Pride of Fatherhood?

PROPOSALS

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For Printing by Subscription

An HISTORY of all the Remarkable Providences

Which have hapned in this Present Age.

As also of what is Curious in the Works of Nature and Art.---With parallel Instances from former Ages. By *WILLIAM TURNER*, M. A. and Vicar of *Walberton* in *Sussex*.

A Work of this nature was set on foot about 30 years ago, by the Learned Mr. *Pool*, Author of the *Synopsis Criticorum*; but, for what Reasons we know not, it was laid aside, and nothing has since appeared on that Subject but a small *Essay*, to invite some others to go on with the work. The Reverend Mr. TURNER (whose late HISTORY OF ALL RELIGIONS hath met with good acceptation) having made Collections proper for such an Undertaking, during the *Course of his Reading, and Ministry*, for near 30 years, and finding, that it is not attempted by any other Hand, is resolved to go on with it, as being fully satisfied, That a work of this kind, must needs be of *Great Use*; especially to such pious minds as delight to observe the manifestations which God doth give of himself, both in his works of CREATION and PROVIDENCE; the former are sufficient to render those who have no other Instructers inexcusable, as we are taught by the Apostle, *Rom.* 1. 20. and the excellency of the latter consists in this, that they are the *Real accomplishments of his written word*, so that to *Record Providences*, seems to be one of the best methods that can be pursued against the abounding *Atheism* of this Age, for by *works of providence, the Confession of a God, and the truth of his word* have been extorted from those very persons who have boldly denied it; MEMORABLE is that passage of *Æschyles* the *Persian* in *Tragedy*: who relating his Countrymens discomfiture by the *Greeks*, gives us this observation, that when the *Grecians* pursued them furiously over the great River *Strymon*, which was then frozen, but began to thaw, he did with his own Eyes see many of those *Gallants* whom he had heard before, maintain so *boldly that there was no God*; every one upon their knees with eyes and hands Lifted up, begging for mercy; and that the Ice might not break till they got over.

The *Sceptick* of this age, may possibly call such a passage in Question, but what can the most *Obdurate Atheist* say to those providences about the *Jews*; which were so clearly foretold in the Scriptures, and part of 'em are visible to their own Eyes. Is not this sufficient to convince them of the being of an Omniscient God, that the sacred Scriptures are his *Revealed Will*; and that *Christianity is the only true Religion*? We doubt not but those men who are able to hold out against such a convincing demonstration, will *flout at this undertaking*; and expose it all they can, but they may Remember the conquest which truth made over their great Champions, Mr. *Hobbs*, *My Lord Rochester*, and Sir *Alan Broderick*, providences which merit their thoughts, and may serve to stop their mouths. But to come to the *design in hand*: It being certainly an incumbent duty according to the *Psalmist*, for *one Generation to praise the Works of the Lord to Another, and to declare his mighty acts*, Psal. 145. 4.

I. We have consulted *many*, and design to peruse all Authors that we can meet with, *Ancient*, or *Modern*, who have writ on this Subject (as *The Treasury of Antient and Modern Times*, *Camerarius*, *Heard*, *Clark*, *Wanly*, &c. and others lately publisht); and make a Collection of the *choicest* passages, in order to the PARALLEL betwixt ancient and modern instances, which cannot but be very serviceable considering that many of those Authors are now become *Scarce*, who recorded the *providences of former ages*; and that there are multitudes of remarkable passages, relating to the *present age*, scattered in so many books, which its hardly possible for any *one man* to have all of 'em by him.

II. We our selves have already collected, and received from Credible Hands, *many remarkable Passages* which were never yet printed; and design to collect as many more as we can, relating to this Present Age.

III. We do hereby invite all men, especially DIVINES, to impart unto us any such *Remarkable Providences* as they have recorded, or remember to have befallen themselves, or others either in *Mercy, or Judgment*.

IV. We desire, for the *improvement of the Collections* which we have already made, that such as have any by them, would send to us their Observations- of *Extraordinary Deliverances by Sea, or Land,--Earthquakes,--unusual Thunder*, &c.—*Inundations,—strange Apparitions*, (but let these be well attested),—*Witchcrafts, Diabolical Possessions,—Appearances in the Regions of the Air,—remarkable Meteors,—exhalations Issuing out of the earth*, or *Prodigies of any sort,—Strange Beasts, Sheep, Horse,—of any unusual Quality, or mixed Generation, or wonderful Bigness, or any other Animal attended with any unusual Circumstances*—You are also desired to send us *accounts of any strange accidents that have befallen men, or women,—remarkable Discoveries of Murther,—any prodigious Births,—Numerous Off-springs,—Persons of extraordinary stature, remarkable either for Excess or Defect,—of prodigious Memories,—any that have strange Antipathies to Meats, Drinks, Animals, parts of Animals,—of unusual Sleep, or Watchings,—Night-Walkers* (in their sleep, we mean), *Predictions that have strangely come to pass,—of men of extream age,—of sudden Deaths* (Extraordinarily Circumstantiated),---*of any reputed dead that have strangely come to Life again,---any thing remarkable that attends a Family, or single person in their Lives, or Deaths, as Lights, or Noises*, &c. *Dwarfs, with their age, and place of abode,—any Improvement in any of the Liberal, or Mechanick Arts,---any Valuable Manuscripts,—or what else you have remarkable, of any kind, the publishing whereof may be either a Service to the publick, or to particular persons*; which if sent, shall not fail to be inserted in its proper place.

These are the HEADS we desire the ingenious Reader, wherever they may come maturely to consider, and to send us accounts of as many of them as fall under his *own proper Experience and Knowledge*, directed to *John Dunton*, at the *Raven* in *Jewen-street*; whence, with all convenient speed, they shall be transmitted to the Press, in the manner already described, with such *Improvements* on the different Heads, as the Reverend *Author* (who is to compile this work) can make, either from his own Experience, or the *best Writers*. But always remember, that what you send be circumstantiated with the Name of the *County, Town, and Place*, you send it from, and of the particular persons concern'd, when the case requires it, (for we shall not take notice of any thing that is *trifling*, or *uncertain*); and that you pay the Postage of all Letters (relating to this Work), that so the Undertaker may not be imposed upon, nor discouraged in this *useful attempt*, which we have now a fair opportunity to accomplish, having received promises of *assistance* from persons of great *Learning and Curiosity*; (We have also the promise of a *Folio Manuscript*, written by the Famous Mr. *SELDEN*, containing the most *Memorable Things* which have hapned in this last Age) and we assure all others, that will be so kind as to impart their *Observations* to us, that they shall be received with all *Candor and Gratitude* imaginable, and the *Names of the Authors* published, if permitted, that the publick may know to whom they are indebted for the promoting of such an *useful Work*.

☞ *Proposals* and *Specimens* (giving a fuller account of this work) are to be had of the *Undertaker*, *John Dunton*, and of most *Booksellers*.

Advertisement.

Such Persons as are willing to Buy or Sell Blank or benefit Tickets in the *Million Lottery*, may have ready mony for either, or be furnished with either, at the *Mercury Office*, at the sign of the *Trinity-House* in *Pimb Lane*, *London*, every day, from 1 a Clock to 4 in the Afternoon; Attendance being given those 3 hours only.

LONDON, Printed for John Dunton at the *Raven* in Jewen-Street, 1695